

## Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6669

S E C R E T AMMAN 0280

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, MASS JO, US, UR

SUBJECT: HEAVY-LIFT HELICOPTERS

REF: AMMAN 0090, STATE 006715, AMMAN 0139

1. WHEN I SAW RIFAI MORNING JANUARY 19, I TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE WITH HIM SUBJECT SOVIET HEAVY LIFT HELICOPTERS WHICH KING DISCUSSED WITH ME LAST WEEK. I REPEATED FOR HIM POINTS MADE IN PARAS 1 AND 2 (REF STATE 006715) APPROPRIATE TO THE SITUATION. I PUT SPECIAL STRESS ON PROBLEMS THIS WOULD CAUSE FOR HAWK, FOR OUR PROGRAMS OF ASSISTANCE IN GENERAL, AND FOR SAUDI SUPPORT.

2. RIFAI REPLIED THAT NO DECISION HAD BEEN MADE AND NO DECISION WOULD BE MADE WITHOUT CONSULTING WITH US FULLY. HE SAID THE HELICOPTERS WOULD BE FOR CIVILIAN PURPOSES (MAINLY) AND THAT EVEN SOVIET CIVIL AVIATION EXPORT ORGANIZATION WAS HANDLING THE DEAL. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT JORDAN DOES NOT KNOW WHETHER JORDAN WILL BE GIVEN THE HELICOPTERS AS A GRANT OR WHETHER A CONCESSIONAL CREDIT ARRANGEMENT WILL BE MADE. ALTERNATIVELY, SOVIETS MIGHT OFFER A PURELY COMMERCIAL DEAL, BUT "WE HAVE NO INTEREST IN THAT." BUT IF WE ARE INTERESTED IN LOOKING INTO THE ARRANGEMENT AFTER OUR TEAM VISITS MOSCOW WE WILL LET YOU KNOW FULL PARTICULARS OF THE DEAL AND "SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO".

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3. I TOLD RIFAI THAT OVER THE YEARS, WE HAD NEVER

BEEN ASKED ABOUT HEAVY-LIFT HELICOPTERS AS PART OF OUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. IF WE HAD BEEN , THEN I WAS SURE THEY WOULD RECEIVE SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION. AS FOR THE PAST HE SAID THAT JORDANIANS HAD DISCUSSED VIETNAM EQUIPMENT WITH US AT OUR INITIATIVE AND NOTHING HAD EVER TURNED UP FOR THEM. THEY HOPED THAT THE US COULD FIND THEM SOMETHING FROM ITS OWN FORCES, PERHAPS EVEN USED EQUIPMENT, AS THEY HAD DONE OFTEN FOR ISRAEL. I TOLD HIM IN REPLY THAT HE HAD OBVIOUSLY NOT BEEN INFORMED THAT WE WERE MAKING TRACKED ARTILLERY AVAILABLE TO JORDAN THIS SPRING AT A COST OF \$18 MILLION TO THE US ARMY, THAT C-130'S AND OTHER ITEMS HAD COME FROM OUR OWN INVENTORY AND THAT JORDAN HAD BEEN GIVEN DRAGON AT WEAPONS BEFORE OUR OWN FORCES RECEIVED THEM IN EUROPE.

4. AS FOR THE REACTION OF THE CONGRESS TO SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION, HE HOPED IT WOULD NOT HAPPEN BECAUSE JORDAN PREFERS AND WANTS US EQUIPMENT. HOWEVER THE SOVIETS WERE READY TO DELIVER NEXT WEEK, WITH THE US IT WOULD COST \$120 MILLION AND MIGHT TAKE SEVERAL YEARS. IN THE LAST ANALYSIS IF THE SAUDIS WOULD NOT PAY \$800 MILLION FOR AN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM, JORDAN WOULD HAVE TO GO SOMEWHERE ELSE. JORDAN MUST HAVE AIR DEFENSE.

5. COMMENT: RIFAI AS USUAL IS PLAYING A HIGH STAKES GAME. HIS IDEA THAT A SOVIET GIFT SHOULD BE COUNTERED BY A US GIFT IS UNREASONABLE, AND CAN BE EASILY COUNTERED IN TURN BY A US-JORDANIAN DECISION TO MAKE HEAVY-LIFT HELICOPTERS THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY IN OUR GRANT-CREDIT PROGRAM WHICH WOULD EFFECTIVELY RESULT IN THEIR BECOMING A US "GIFT". IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO KNOW WHERE THE USG DECISION AT PRESENT RESTS ON COMMERCIAL RELEASE OF HELICOPTERS. GIVEN THE INCREASING POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THIS QUESTION, WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW IN ADVANCE WHAT IS CONTEMPLATED AND IN TIME FOR YOU TO HAVE OUR COMMENTS FACTORED INTO USG THINKING BEFORE REPEAT BEFORE A FINAL DECISION IS MADE. END COMMENT.

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6. ACTION REQUESTED: INFORMATION ON THE STATUS OF THE MUNITIONS CONTROL DECISION ON APPROVAL OF A LICENSE TO SELL HEAVY-LIFT HELICOPTERS TO JORDAN PRIOR TO FINAL DECISION AND IN TIME FOR EMBASSY COMMENT.  
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